

Examiners' report on 2023 ICCG

The overall results were:

Distinction for 90% and above: 179 candidates (40.6% of cohort)

Merit for 70% and above: 151 candidates (34.2% of cohort)

Pass for 46% and above: 64 candidates (14.5% of cohort)

That meant 47 candidates (10.7% of the cohort) did not receive an award.

The papers were marked by four examiners, and sample scripts near potential boundaries were moderated by two experienced classicists independent of the ICCG. Also, after grade boundaries were agreed following an examiners' meeting, two of the examiners reread all the scripts two marks or fewer beneath any of the boundaries. Of 33 scripts that fell in these categories, two were moved up a level. This exercise reassured us that there was an impressive level of consistency between the different examiners, and that the mark scheme had been accurately used by all.

As in the pilot we were hugely impressed by the overall level of performance and the quality of the teaching that the scripts showed. We hope that many candidates will be encouraged by the ICCG to move onto greater challenges in Greek. Four candidates out of the final entry of 441 candidates particularly impressed by producing papers from which we were unable to deduct any marks.

Section 1

This section was well answered with the average score of all candidates 17.2 out of 20. Candidates seemed to have heeded the advice offered in the report on the pilot exam last year, and there were few errors caused by a failure to read the question, or errors over proper names (though the names were not so easily confusable as they had been in the pilot).

- (a) This was correctly answered by almost all candidates. We did not penalise errors of tense, here or generally elsewhere in the comprehension sections.
- (b) Any of the identifiers of the elder son were acceptable ('first', 'elder', 'eldest' or 'Aeson'), as was any idiom for taking power.
- (c) (i) Almost everyone answered this correctly.
(ii) Here we insisted that the idea of 'stealing' power was rendered. 'Taking' was not enough for κλεπτεiv.
- (d) Most candidates got this right, but with the multiple choice questions the idea is to test the understanding of the passage, and the options will not necessarily be literal

renderings (so here the correct option A was ‘many soldiers were collected by Pelias’ although the Greek participle was of course active).

- (e) (i) This was well done, except there was some confusion of παντας with πεντε (which led to problems with (ii) as well). Here we did not allow ‘babies’ for παιδας, as at this stage there was no indication that Pelias was aware of the age of any potential children of Aeson (he was not that kind of brother!).
- (ii) Pansexual was, perhaps unsurprisingly, popular (as was pandemic). Pants was the most common wrong answer. For most candidates to achieve the correct answer it required them to abandon the stem παντ-.
- (f) This was probably the question that candidates found hardest in this section, but most tried to identify the phrase, rather than just a single word (μετα). Some candidates seem to have misread this question and taken it to be ‘the Greek phrase which tells us that Alcimede gave birth to Jason’ in spite of our use of bold and underlining in order to prevent this.
- (g) This was well done, and candidates were only penalised once if they thought the potential victims were plural. Here we did allow baby, since that seemed a natural word to use of a child that has just been born.

Section 2

As is clear from the mark scheme, the two chunks to translate were marked out of 140 (70 each) initially and then the total was divided by 3.5, to give a total out of 40. The average score of candidates was 30.7 out of 40 (a bit of a drop from the 33/40 average in the pilot).

As in the pilot, the mark scheme was intentionally designed to be generous, rewarding any knowledge on the part of the candidates, with a few words carrying up to four marks (for vocabulary knowledge, and for different aspects of the inflection of the word and the presence of a prefix). This again meant that the heaviest penalties were for omission: candidates should be encouraged to check carefully that they have not omitted a sentence by mistake (that cost one candidate a distinction), and to write down those things that they can do, even when they can’t see their way through the whole sentence.

Unlike in the pilot, candidates did not find the second passage particularly harder than the first (though the average score for the second was still slightly lower).

In the first sentence, προσεδραμον as well handled, though there were quite a few errors at the end with τοις φυλαξιν being taken as singular: again it is worth stressing to candidates the help offered by the article even if they are unsure of the declension of the noun. A few candidates even made this mistake with οι στρατιωται, and continued with this through the passage, even though there were repeated indications that this was wrong (these candidates were not repeatedly penalised). In the third sentence, quite a few candidates did not know μεντοι and the superlative in καλλιστην was often missed. βουλη was confused with βοη. We

were happy with many different ways of rendering the participle λαβουσα, but if candidates took it as a main verb, they needed to add ‘and’ to link to the actual main verb. ‘Taking’ or a more idiomatic alternative (such as ‘making’, ‘adopting’) were both fine, but we penalised ‘capturing’: it is worth emphasising to candidates that not all the listed options for vocab may be acceptable in a particular context.

In the next two sentences, the imperatives were generally well handled as was ἀπεθανεν though θαυσομεν was often made passive, and many candidates missed the future. In the final sentence of the first passage, quite a few candidates could not identify ἐπιστευσαν and made it passive ‘were persuaded by’, perhaps influenced by the dative τοις λογοις (for which ‘story’ was popular, and won credit, though not for the plural). The final verb, ἀπηλθον, was worth four marks because of its prefix, though in the context it was quite easy to identify.

In the first sentence of the second passage αὐτος caused problems, with candidates struggling to identify correctly how to translate it when used attributively with the article. This would certainly be something worth revising with candidates. The second sentence caused problems for many, with its opening genitive of ‘time within which’, some not knowing χωρα, and a lot of candidates not able to deal with the present participle φερων in a way that made sense. The next easier sentence caused perhaps unexpected problems, with many candidates putting ‘there is very great danger’ rather than ‘the danger is very great’: the predicate of the verb ‘to be’ will not usually have an article. Also, many candidates missed the superlative meaning, even though μεγας itself does not appear in Taylor book 1. The next sentence was well handled, with most candidates getting μετα + genitive correct, and most handled the adverb correctly – there were relatively few appearances of ‘brave Jason’.

The sentence about Pelias’ continuing fears was well handled, though a few did not recognise καιπερ (which does come late in Taylor 1); ἐτι was generally known, though not by all. The examiners are trying to include some trickier elements of grammar and vocab in the second section of the translation, and candidates certainly found this in the second half of this part. In the Delphi sentence, though candidates generally omitted the article correctly with nouns, quite a few erroneously put ‘the Delphi’, and many thought the consultation was of multiple gods, translating θεον as θεους, to such an extent that we tweaked the mark scheme to reward those who got this right. The direct question was not very well handled, though ἀρα itself was usually recognised: ἄλλος in particular was not well known. In the short penultimate sentence, some candidates pressed on with plural gods – others did not seem bothered by the discrepancy between their translation of these two sentences. Again, αὐτω was very poorly handled, with many candidates not observing the case, and taking it as ὁ θεος αὐτος.

The final sentence was the first to raise the potential confusion of ἐν/ἐν, which the examiners were concerned to give candidates every chance to get right, though the number was essential to the detail of the story (this passage may make for good practice of this potential confusion for future years): this was why we included the μονον, though that was not known by all. We allowed a wide range of translations for ἐχοντα: pleasingly many put ‘wearing’. ‘In’ was also allowed, though it may have been out of confusion by candidates who omitted the ‘one’.

Section 3

This section was well answered with the average score of all candidates 23.4 out of 30. As in the pilot, the grammatical questions in this section tended to be the biggest discriminators between candidates, and key identifiers of those candidates who scored distinctions. As ever, it is worth noting that technical terms are not required for correct answers in these questions.

(a-c) were handled very well by a large proportion of candidates, and many were able to identify ὦν correctly, though there was some confusion of particle/participle. Although most got the multiple choice in (b) right, some put (A) ‘in the street’: again it would be worth emphasising to candidates to think about the sense of the passage.

(c) Most got (i) correct, though we did not allow ‘noise’ for φωνη. Many candidates used the next sentence (as also given in the following question), but we accepted ‘an old woman crying’. In (ii) ‘go through’ was accepted as readily as ‘go across’. Many candidates seemed to be guessing the meaning of χαλεπος with ‘wintry’ a popular, if unlikely, guess. (iv) was answered correctly by almost all candidates.

(d) γινωσκω was not securely known: we allowed ‘get to know’, but not ‘understand (the goddess)’ unless it had the addition of ‘understand who the goddess was’ or something similar. In (ii) only the very best candidates came up with ‘am willing’ for ἐθελω, though we of course allowed ‘want’.

We were very pleased how many candidates answered (iii) well, and some in huge detail, though this question was still a good discriminator. To get both mark candidates needed to be specific about which form each one was: just saying one is for the subject and one for the object was not enough. However, technical language was not required.

(e) (i) was one of the hardest questions on the paper. Only the very best got that it was one of his sandals that fell off into the water, though quite a few got everything else right here. As ever, αὐτος caused problems, not least with it being used in two different forms in one sentence, and a mistake with the second one (αὐτο) often led to enough confusion to cost the final mark.

In (ii) lots of candidates thought that ὕδωρ was the object, perhaps as a result of drilling on the accusative being used for objects. Some were confused, identifying it as the object, but also with the idea of ‘into’. We gave credit where we felt we could.

In (iii) when tense is asked for, it is not required to specify ‘strong’ or ‘weak’.

(f) In (i) some omitted marketplace, although they may well have known it. Some confused it with ἀγορα.

(ii) was well done by many candidates, but we did not penalise ποδας being rendered in the singular, given the context of the story here. Some still persisted with plural gods here, an error carried over from the translation.

(iii) was well done: ‘monobrow’ was a nice answer.

- (g) (i) was well done, though some confusingly had Pelias being taken to the Golden Fleece, which surely would be unlikely, even for someone who did not know the myth. In (ii) as in all the other grammar questions, the technical term was not required: ‘giving an order’ was fine.

Section 4

This section was – as in the pilot – the greatest discriminator. The average score on it was 5.7 out of 10. As in the pilot, we did award half marks in this section in order to allow candidates to score for partially correct Greek. We make clear below where this was the case.

- (a) These proved hard, and the second one was particularly difficult: very few candidates got it right. Perhaps it would be worth revising the four feminine 2nd declension nouns with students.
- (b) For (i) we awarded a half mark for the augment and half for the correct ending. The first part of (ii) required the right answer for any mark. In the second part, we thought about including the article as well in the question. This might have reminded candidates that ἄθλον is neuter, and may have made the question less difficult for candidates. We gave half a mark to those who put ἄθλους.
- (c) This was a hard question of course, but worked rather better than the sentence in the pilot, perhaps because fewer breathings were required. On the main words we credited endings and stem separately, so it is important to stress to candidates to put something, and the articles should offer some easy marks. We didn’t penalise the first little error (a slight spelling mistake, or the breathing missed), and didn’t demand a particular word order (within reason), but that might be an issue in a future year if there is a genitive, for example.